

VZCZCXRO3441
PP RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #1966 2291607
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 171607Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4205
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 001966

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DEPT FOR AF/SPG
DEPT PASS TO AID/W FOR AFR ALSO FOR OFDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: UNDSS Security Briefing, North Darfur Aug 17

11. Summary: At UNDSS Security briefing on August 17, NMIS and the humanitarian community expressed extreme apprehension about the implications of the AU's directive to expel JEM and SLA-Abdel Wahid representatives from the CFC process and AMIS compound. Concerns were expressed that AMIS access to areas controlled by JEM and/or Abdel Wahid will become even more constrained. NGOs are concerned that the action will further undermine an already unstable security environment and negatively impact humanitarian access to displaced populations and conflict-affected areas. End Summary.

12. UNMIS Regional Head of Office Niels Scott provided the August 17 UNDSS security briefing. He cited only three recent significant security events:

- August 15: A GoS military truck careened into a number of bystanders near the market in El Fasher, resulting in 7 killed and roughly 18 injured. Cause of the accident is still unclear, though it is thought that the driver unintentionally lost control of the vehicle. (Note: We have not observed any hostile civilian reaction directed toward the local government or GoS military forces as a result of the accident. End note.)

- August 15: A two-vehicle ICRC convoy was stopped roughly 20 kilometers south of Tawila by unidentified armed men in military dress. The men took one vehicle and allowed the ICRC staff to proceed with its other vehicle. No indication of the identity of the bandits, though ICRC is investigating.

- August 16: A four-vehicle ICRC convoy in the vicinity of Jebel Mara was halted by armed men, who took two vehicles, some communications equipment and one ICRC driver. Remaining ICRC personnel were released. An investigation is on-going.

13. As a result of the car-jackings, ICRC has temporarily suspended its activities in the Tabit area of southern North Darfur. Niels postulated that the recent spate of car-jackings could be attributed to either: a) opportunistic banditry, or b) systematic efforts by rebel groups to build up their vehicle inventories in anticipation of renewed fighting.

14. Significant discussion during the briefing focused on the AU's directive to expel JEM and SLA-Abdel Wahid representatives from the CFC process and AMIS compound. UNMIS and the humanitarian community expressed extreme apprehension about the implications of the action, which suggests that AMIS access to areas controlled by JEM and/or Abdel Wahid will become even more constrained. NGOs are visibly concerned that the AU's directive will further undermine an already unstable security environment and negatively impact their own humanitarian access to displaced populations and conflict-affected areas.

15. One protection officer from UNMIS, which has been involved in mediating the return of AMIS elements to Abu Shouk and El Salaam IDP camps, indicated that the AU directive could cause the collapse of this mediation and will only reinforce the perception of AMIS partiality.

